
Miscellaneous

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"You've never had control. That's the illusion". Mimesis of world and catharsis in Jurassic Park

Abstract

The aim of this article is to explore the cinematic narrative and form of *Jurassic Park* (Spielberg, 1993), in order to identify its textual *topic* or central thematic concern. For this a mixed methodology was used, incorporating tools from film analysis into the hermeneutics of poetic possible worlds. First, the article demonstrates how the film's initial four narrative blocks replicate its overall premise on a smaller scale, adapting the central idea to different circumstances. In each case, an external agent intrudes into a system of possibilities, marked by connotations of the unnatural, threatening to destroy that "world." Second, the article outlines the fundamental character traits of those responsible for these unnatural intrusions and how the film portrays the character's cathartic journey. The one who introduces an improper possibility into the system disastrously attempts to emulate a divine creator, manipulating their reality and suppressing dissenting voices. At the same time, this character type is symbolically represented with the worst attributes of childhood: immaturity, irresponsibility, selfishness, and cowardice. The most eloquent image of the purification of this illusion of control is found in the mirrored shot pairs, which initially depict a certain version of reality, only to reveal, in the film's final stretch, the hidden truth behind Hammond's delusional pretensions.

Keywords

Film analysis, possible worlds, Jurassic Park, Spielberg, textual topic.

1. Introducción. *Jurassic Park*, a minor work or commonplace?

When *Jurassic Park* was released in 1993, something new was introduced into mass culture: the possibility of a convincing audiovisual coexistence between these extinct animals and humans¹. The vast amount of cultural artifacts and works derived from Spielberg’s film—which continue to be produced today—show how this film established a cultural commonplace within contemporary society. Thus, as with any poetic commonplace (Abellán-García Barrio, 2023, pp. 219–234), the film is an expression of a shared worldview and vision of life in which we can recognise ourselves. Given the profound impact of *Jurassic Park* on our audiovisual imagination, we shall revisit this historically important work with the aim of uncovering important aspects for those who recognise it as significant within our shared cultural universe.

The technological innovations in *Jurassic Park* are practically unanimously praised, as is the film’s success as a commercial and entertainment product (Gordon, 2008, pp. 203–206; Kolker, 2011, p. 271). However, at the time of its release, *Jurassic Park* received harsh criticism from the specialist media (McBride, 2010, p. 423; Fonte, 2008, p. 286) and was considered one of Steven Spielberg’s lesser works. It was labelled “a disappointment”, “a dull film” (Cantero, 2006, p. 263), a failure on the narrative level (Caldevilla Domínguez, 2005, p. 122; Kolker, 2011, p. 324), and with poor cinematic language and style (Fonte, 2008, p. 287); Spielberg himself has been critical of his work in this regard (Schatz, 2017, p. 36).

However, as McBride (2010) points out, there were some dissenting voices from the widespread negative criticism. In this line, and considering the emergence of works calling for a rigorous analysis of Spielberg’s entire filmography (Sánchez-Escalonilla, 2004; Kendrick, 2014; Morris, 2017a; Alba, 2017), studies have highlighted notable aspects of this film and approach it using methodologies from film analysis (Baird, 1998; Buckland, 1999; 2006, pp. 174–192; Alba, 2017, pp. 145–162; Mairata, 2018, pp. 203–212).

Our research is particularly interested in the underlying thematic issues in Spielberg’s first *Jurassic* adventure. Several topics have received sufficient attention: the transformation and symbolism of the character Alan Grant as a substitute father figure, while also being close to another figure, the dinosaur (e.g., Fonte, 2008, p. 287; Alba, 2017, pp. 147–150), the disintegration of the family, marital breakdown and the symbolisms of the contemporary American family (Gordon, 2008, p. 208; Fonte, 2008, pp. 43–44), or the reflection on the connection between nature and morality proposed by the film (Spence, 2008; Clarke, 2014, p. 34). Other aspects, however, while noted remain unexplored: the theme of the person playing at being the Creator God (Caldevilla, 2005, p. 128; Fonte, 2008, p. 54, p. 288); and the theme of Hammond’s childlike figure (Sánchez-Escalonilla, 2004; Fonte, 2008, p. 288), which Spielberg presents as a “sanctified Santa Claus” (Baxter, 2005, p. 435).

Some of Spielberg’s decisions have also been pointed out, encouraging a consideration of the symbolic unity of the film: the trope of inversion “foreshadows an upside-down world” (Morris, 2017b, p. 71), as seen in the first shot of lawyer Gennaro reflected in the water; the use of off-screen space in the “threat scenes” employed by the film (Baird, 1998); the connection between distant shots in the footage, yet similar in their composition, which could suggest a certain type of path or transformation process (Clarke, 2014, p. 35); or the concept of one scene as the reverse of another, such as the helicopter arriving at the island at the beginning and leaving it at the end (Buckland, 2006, p. 188).

¹ Note that we are recognising the physical verisimilitude of the film, with a psychological impact on the audience qualitatively different from Crichton’s novel (1995), as thoroughly analysed by Buckland (1999). Seeing a person “authentically” interacting with dinosaurs on the screen opens up a repertoire of imaginatively diverse possibilities compared to what a literary text presents.

Reframing the artistic merit of *Jurassic Park* seems a challenge that calls for a different approach. If poetic commonplaces so genuinely express our world and ourselves, it is fitting to offer an approach that takes into account precisely that: the world or central themes the film aims to communicate.

2. Textual topic and mimesis of world in cinematic works

Eco (1979) uses the expression “textual topic,” or the *aboutness* of fiction, to refer to what others in the audiovisual field have identified as the theme or meaning of a film (Brenes, 2016), its “*internal logos*” or “internal law” (García-Noblejas, 1988, p. 53), or simply the implicit author. In audiovisual discourse, the textual *topic* unfolds through the expressive resources specific to this type of narrative, although is not identical to them, but rather, the form and arrangement of each in relation to one another, that is, the aesthetic unity of the work, are used to structure the central theme that governs them (García-Noblejas, 1988, p. 52). Thus, the notion of the textual *topic* assumes the inescapable symbolic nature of artistic creativity (p. 70).

The thematic content of a film is linked to general human concerns. “And these concerns, understood as values, have a distinctly moral character, insofar as they respond to absolute speculative notions, that is, notions detached from historical specifics” (García-Noblejas, 1988, p. 41). At best, audiovisual works imitate reality, act “as if” real life; that is, while different from reality, they have a similar structure (p. 56). In the case of *Jurassic Park*, the remote possibility of reviving life forms that went extinct millions of years ago is not a matter of general interest; perhaps the uncritical acceptance of scientific possibilities, and their moral implications, as explored by Spence (2008) in relation to this film, may create thematic opportunities. However, the symbolic content of the narrative does not align with an allegorical interpretation, either of the dynamics of capitalism (Brown, 2009, pp. 15–16), or the representations of oral and anal sadism (Gordon, 2008, pp. 203–217) that may be found in Spielberg’s film.

Eco develops his concept of the textual *topic* within the framework of possible worlds theory. The logical-analytical perspective on possible worlds which, for example explores the distance between the inventory of our world and that of literary works (Albaladejo, 1998; Ryan, 2015) has already been applied to *Jurassic Park* (Buckland, 1999). In this paper, following Eco and other scholars who adopt a more phenomenological-existential perspective, we seek to identify within Amblin’s production signs that reveal what the film is fundamentally about; that is, what explains its world in a poetic sense. Drawing on Eco’s intuition, we suggest that the notion of textual *topic* within the theory of possible worlds is particularly fitting precisely because “world” is an anthropological category: “world” refers to the system of natural and cultural possibilities available to a person, as well as to modes of existential engagement—in essence, decisions—and thus to values and ideas concerning the place of each reality within the totality to which it belongs (Zubiri, 2010; Marín, 2019). Eco (1979), Pavel (1986), García-Noblejas (2005), and Abellán-García Barrio (2023) have advanced this perspective, in which the most relevant notion of possibility is neither logical nor naturalistic, but rather existential, that is, concerned with the characters’ success or failure in navigating their lives (Abellán-García Barrio, 2023, p. 275).

According to Abellán-García Barrio (2023, p. 277), a poetic possible world communicates a conception of the world through expressive means that structure and create a hierarchy of dramatic space and time, proposing “a reading or interaction program that changes the recipient, reordering their relationship with the cosmos.” He adds: “When we talk about a *poetic possible world*, we refer both to the cultural device and to the worldview it offers us [...] we speak of cultural devices that offer a *mimesis of world*, whether or not it meets the criteria of so-called *literary realism*” (p. 284). Although “any feature of the world can be susceptible to mimesis,” some are essential: “the person and their circumstances, nature and culture; and social life” (p. 287), and more essentially, the mimesis of

world “imitates the structure and dynamism of the world surrounding the action taking place in it” (p. 287).

The object of study of this hermeneutic, therefore, is precisely the content of the textual *topic* and asserts that its access must assume the symbolic nature of poetic possible worlds. As Abellán-García Barrio (2023, p. 286) indicates, each possible world has an intelligible or formal dimension “that allows us, by *looking* at the sensible, to see, reach the aesthetic vision or inner *image* foreseen in its program” (see also García-Noblejas, 2004; De la Prida Caballero, 2021, pp. 113–114). The notion of mimesis of world is useful for understanding how an audiovisual work, while different from life, could be structurally similar. The macro and micro levels employed by logical-analytical theories of possible worlds—distinguishing between macrostructure and microstructure (Albaladejo, 1998; Planells de la Maza, 2017, pp.122–163; Hernández Ruiz, 2023, pp.182–185)—acquire a new meaning if the symbolic dimension of cinematic worlds is admitted: the micro level, or microcosm, which could be fragments of a film, such as a scene or the circumstance of one or more characters, could function as a scaled-down image of the macro level, macrocosm, or the total world of the work. Film analysis has shown that a small segment of a movie is capable of condensing the structural parameters of the entire work (Zunzunegui, 2016, p. 59).

One may ask then what result we would obtain if we approach *Jurassic Park* from the perspective of mimesis of world and whether this exercise would be able to achieve a significant epistemic advance to current research.

3. Methodology

The research consists of two parts. The first offers an analysis of the film’s initial system of possibilities, focussing on the natural and cultural aspects that shape its discourse. It begins with the series of decisions by Hammond and InGen, establishing the initial configuration of the world within the film. Next, drawing on the repetition of audiovisual motifs in the opening scenes (Buckland, 2006, p. 181), we examine the first four microcosms or narrative blocks according to their shared expressive elements and in dialogue with the macrocosm of the film. In this comparison, each microcosm is analysed according to three key aspects of mimesis of world (Abellán-García Barrio, 2023, p. 287): the possibility introduced into the system, the environment, and the circumstance. Finally, the research clarifies the bias inherent in Hammond’s claim over the world and the world’s reaction to his actions.

Although the unified meaning of a cinematic world cannot be identified completely with any single character (García-Noblejas, 2004, p. 82), its *internal logos* becomes intelligible when the consequences of their actions are made visible, given that the internal logic of their positionality both constitutes them and drives their actions (García-Noblejas, 1988, p. 54). Thus, the second part of this research focuses on the character of Hammond who, while not the protagonist, serves as a practical case for analysing the cognitive journey of the film. This analysis considers three fundamental dramatic aspects: the character’s initial situation, the exercise of his freedom in relation to the will of others, and his actions and inner transformation, which implies considering the film’s cathartic value. Following suggestions regarding the probable link between long shots as expressions of a transformative journey (Clarke, 2014, p. 35) and the trope of inversion as a foreshadowing of an upside-down world (Morris, 2017b, p. 71), this study draws on the concept of *mundus inversus* (Babcock, 1978) as a possible expression of the purification which may have a place within the textual *topic* of *Jurassic Park*.

In both parts, the hermeneutics of poetic possible worlds employs common procedures in film analysis, which generally consider two closely connected discursive dimensions (Gómez Tarín, 2015; Rodríguez Serrano, 2019; De la Prida Caballero, 2021; Encinas Cantalapiedra *et al.*, 2025): the screenplay by Koepp and Crichton, and the cinematic form created by Spielberg, which is of course

only one of any number of possible realisations of the script, with distinct thematic emphases. Film analysis is applied more intensively to certain scenes, partially following suggestions from film microanalysis, moving “from images and their organisation toward their deeper meaning” (Zunzunegui, 2016, p. 182).

Thus, the research objectives of this work are the following:

OBJ 1: Clarify the configuration of the textual world of *Jurassic Park* in order to understand its discursive position regarding the human concerns it addresses.

OBJ 2: Examine the message the film seeks to convey through the transformation of the character Hammond.

OBJ 3: Explain, in light of the findings from OBJ 1 and OBJ 2, the textual *topic* of *Jurassic Park*.

4. The introduction of an external possibility that puts the natural order into crisis

In the *pre-diegetic* context of *Jurassic Park*'s opening scene, we find the first key to accessing the film's textual *topic*: the map of possibilities that appears before Hammond and InGen following the discovery of dinosaur DNA in amber. This event initiates the ‘decision tree’ that shapes the film's initial world. A natural possibility that offers new options within the realm of human culture.

In the first fork in the pre-diegetic actions, Hammond and InGen reject the option of ignoring the discovery and choose to embrace its possibilities. This decision leads to a second fork: whether to publicly share the discovery with the world or to conceal it. By opting for secrecy, a new set of possible actions emerges, from which only private research is realised through which scientists discover that the dinosaur DNA is incomplete. In this phase they propose filling the genetic gaps with frog DNA and develop the necessary technology to bring certain dinosaur species back to life. Following this initial research, the company decides to design a hybrid between a theme park and a dinosaur zoo, located on Nublar Island, Costa Rica: Jurassic Park. Additionally, they choose to keep the project entirely secret—not even the investors are aware of it—until its official unveiling.

The billionaire did not face any pressing need to make these decisions. Hammond and InGen artificially introduce an extinct natural possibility into the physical world, impacting the planetary reality by creating the possibility of human coexistence with dinosaurs. This option primarily triggers an ethical question in the character of Ian Malcolm: Should certain possibilities be pursued simply because they can be realised?

The first fifteen minutes of the film emphasise the idea that introducing an external possibility will destabilise a system and may ultimately be harmful. To convey this, the movie employs the same narrative strategy across the four small narrative blocks or microcosms at the beginning. Each block presents a different circumstance, with distinct characters in various locations. These four circumstances—as shown in Table 1, share narrative and audiovisual parameters that reinforce their similarity and harmony—are:

1) The opening scene of the film, where the accident that triggers the main plot occurs: during the transfer of a velociraptor from its cage to the enclosure, it escapes and kills a park worker on Nublar Island (Costa Rica).

2) The second and third scenes, where InGen's lawyer, Donald Gennaro, arrives at the amber mines in Mano de Dios (Dominican Republic) to meet with Rostagno, the site manager, to discuss the accident at the park.

3) The fourth, fifth, and sixth scenes, set in Montana (United States), where John Hammond interrupts the excavation led by Drs. Alan Grant and Ellie Sattler. His abrupt arrival by helicopter jeopardises the dig site. The two scientists accept the billionaire's offer: to spend a weekend consulting at Hammond's nature reserve in exchange for funding for their excavations.

4) In the seventh scene, at a restaurant in Costa Rica, Dodgson, an enigmatic employee of a rival company to InGen, provides Dennis Nedry, the head of computer operations at *Jurassic Park*, with the first payment for his industrial espionage and a device to steal dinosaur embryos.

Table 1. Common Elements in the Four Narrative Blocks at the Beginning of *Jurassic Park*.

	Block 1	Block 2	Block 3	Block 4
Intruder	Raptor	Gennaro	Hammond	Dodgson
Transport in which the intruder arrives	Cage/crane	Raft	Helicopter	Car
Reason for its appearance	Transfer to the raptor enclosure	Accident/lawsuit	Contracting consultants	Industrial espionage
Initial position	Off-screen	Off-screen	Off-screen	Off-screen
Scenario	Jurassic Park	River/amber mine	Excavation	Terrace of the restaurant
Extras	Park workers	Mine workers	Excavation workers	Restaurant clients
Security and incidents	Failure of the coupling of the cage and the enclosure	Although they don’t fall into the river, they regularly trip or bang their head when entering the mine	The helicopter does not follow the safety norms of the site.	Plan to steal industrial property

Source: Own elaboration.

These four small totalities or world syntheses, which given their initial placement in the film mark their poetic character and guide the interpretation of the entire narrative. These are small analogies of the film’s macrocosm, where InGen’s project—an intruder—introduces elements of an extinct cosmic configuration into the existing order. The presence of groups of emphatically homogeneous extras—as seen in the left shot of Figure 1, from the third narrative block—further highlights the contrast between what is proper to this world and the new, discordant elements that intrude. The intruder is often visually distinct from the extras—right shot in Figure 1, from the second narrative block. The importance of off-screen space in the entry of these four external agents emphasizes their foreignness to the system they disrupt. The natural order of these four structurally and dynamically similar totalities is disturbed by the introduction of an intruder characterised as unnatural or even “antinatural”. The two microcosms shown in the shots in Figure 1 suggest that the only role of the dinosaurs at the moment is to be carefully unearthed and studied.

Figure 1. Left: The anonymous members of Grant and Sattler’s research team carefully unearth dinosaur bones. Right: Lawyer Gennaro speaks with Rostagno at the amber mines in Mano de Dios.



Source: *Jurassic Park*, Steven Spielberg, 1993.

The contrast between nature and a certain unnatural intervention appears at the very beginning of the film as a central issue in its textual *topic*. At the heart of this is the theme of the powerful or godlike man (mentioned in Caldevilla, 2005, p. 128; Fonte, 2008, p. 54, p. 288), who seeks to give a new opportunity to cosmic possibilities that have been naturally discarded. InGen's project on the idyllic Nublar Island clearly has cosmogonic aspirations.

The film aims to assess both the soundness and stability of this small world, as well as Hammond's evaluations of his own creation. The three expert evaluators play a crucial role in this examination. The two scenes in which Grant, Sattler, and Malcolm begin to raise the ethical questions prompted by the park's project—in the projection room and in the laboratories—introduce a certain disorder or disruption of the space-time conventions Spielberg has used up to that point: axis shifts, framing where empty air is on the opposite side of the characters' gazes, and less naturalistic cinematography. These enunciative markers suggest that *mise-en-scène* and framing respond to this transition in the thinking of the three doctors.

5. Catharsis and return to the world: from false illusions to reality

5.1. Hammond as a child

McBride (2010) is right to remind us that the film “makes his [Hammond] conduct seem more misguided than villainous” (p. 422). Despite being the oldest character in the entire footage, he exhibits behaviour more akin to that of a child than an adult. Malcolm himself tells Hammond that he uses genetics “like a kid who’s found his dad’s gun.” As Spence (2008, p. 99) points out, “Malcolm has determined that Hammond is irresponsible, which is to say that his actions are morally wrong.” The film ascribes Hammond with the attributes of immaturity in three ways.

The first is his obsession with dinosaurs, almost as childish as that of his grandson, Tim. The elderly man downplays the dangers posed by the dinosaurs, to the point where Dr. Sattler has to remind him that “they’re out there where people are dying.” It is no coincidence that the billionaire is the only main character who is never directly involved in dangerous situations caused by these animals.

The second is Hammond's absence in situations not to his liking, avoiding his responsibilities, such as when Gennaro visits the amber mine to deal with a lawsuit for twenty million dollars filed by the family of the worker killed at the park. At other times, he sends others to resolve problems that he himself has caused, for example, when he sends Muldoon to rescue his grandchildren.

The third is Hammond's perpetual daydreaming or false illusions, causing him to be, in some way, detached from reality. We highlight two scenes showing this detachment from reality.

The first scene takes place on the stairs of the main building in the park when the story introduces Lex and Tim, Hammond's grandchildren. The children leap into their grandfather's arms, causing him to fall, laughing. The content of the dialogue between the grandfather and the grandchildren is purely recreational: the kids declare how much they loved the gifts, and the elderly man asks them about the exciting helicopter ride. A short mid-shot at eye level shows this joyful encounter (figure 2, left). In the same shot, the camera performs a vertical pan upward, depicting the four adults—Malcolm, Sattler, Gennaro, and Grant—in a low-angle mid-shot (figure 2, right). In this way, the characters are separated into two groups, placing Hammond in the children's position. The camera movement serves to contrast the elderly man's childlike demeanour with the more

mature Grant, who, despite protecting himself with his hat from what Sattler seems to suggest with her gaze, ends up taking responsibility for the children².

Figure 2. Left: Frame from the beginning of the vertical pan, where Hammond hugs his grandchildren. Right: Frame from the end of the vertical pan, showing Malcolm, Sattler, Gennaro, and Grant.



Source: Jurassic Park, Steven Spielberg, 1993.

The second selected scene takes place later, during the moment of calm after the T-Rex attack and after the scene in which Tim and Lex embrace Grant, who promises to stay awake all night to protect them³. The structure of the narrative connects and contrasts the palaeontologist’s heroic behaviour with the evasive attitude of the Jurassic Park creator in the immediately following scene. The scene in question is of a conversation between Hammond and Sattler in the restaurant in the visitor centre. The opening tracking shots emphasise the connection between the children’s merchandise in the gift shop—dolls, t-shirts, lunchboxes, canteens, stamp sets, etc.—and Hammond, who sits at the end of a long table eating ice cream under the watchful gaze of Dr. Sattler. The lighting on him is warm, while she is illuminated by a cooler, dimmer light. On the table, there are eight open tubs of ice cream, most of them of one or two kilos, along with two others of about five kilos or more. Hammond seems to justify eating the melting ice cream straight from the tub—“They were all melting”—while Sattler updates him on Malcolm’s medical condition after he was injured in the T-Rex attack. The contrast between Hammond’s childish and reckless attitude and Dr. Sattler’s mature and responsible demeanour is clear.

After dismissing the issue of his lost grandchildren, arguing that they are in the hands of a dinosaur expert, Hammond speaks to Sattler about Petticoat Lane, the first attraction he built—a flea circus. “But with this place, I wanted to show them something that wasn’t an illusion. Something that was real. Something that they could... see and touch. An aim not devoid of merit.” By declaring that reality is what can be seen and touched, he reveals a lack of imagination—in a sense similar to what Sánchez-Escalonilla (2004) has pointed out regarding the opposition in the film between science and imagination. According to Hammond, the failure of the dinosaur park lies in its reliance on automation, something he believes can be corrected in the future. For Sattler, Jurassic Park

² For a discussion on Grant’s fatherhood in relation to his transformational arc, see Sánchez-Escalonilla (2004), Gordon (2008, p. 208), and Alba (2017, pp. 145-162). Regarding this aspect, North’s (2017, p. 390) observation is crucial: Grant moves from placing dinosaurs between himself and the children — specifically the one from the Montana excavation — to placing himself between the dinosaurs and the children.

³ Alba (2017, pp. 152-153) points out that these children are not with their parents — who are far away, handling their divorce somewhere in the U.S.—or with their grandfather, conveniently sheltered from danger in the park’s central facilities—and they have just been abandoned by Gennaro, who is devoured by a dinosaur that serves as a symbol of parental absence. Amid the horror, Lex and Tim find a paternal and protective figure in Grant. This bond between Grant, a scientist, and the children is, according to Kolker (2011, p. 317), a manifestation of a common trope in Spielberg’s cinema: the “special friend.” In Crichton’s novel (1995, pp. 143-144), Grant offers the following explanation for children’s fascination with dinosaurs: they are symbolic parents.

remains a flea circus: “You’ve never had control. That’s the illusion. I was overwhelmed by the power of this place. But I made a mistake too. I didn’t have enough respect for that power, and it’s out now.” From the start, the staging and framing use the surrounding elements to visually connect Sattler with the dinosaurs and Hammond with the buffet food. A striking detail in the background behind Hammond draws attention: on the wall, the lower right corner of *Guernica* by Pablo Picasso is visible. Only at the end of the scene, when Sattler concludes her speech about the futility of Hammond’s illusion, does the shot widen to reveal the full backdrop, showing a wall where a stampede of dinosaurs nearly engulfs the Cubist painting and appears to charge toward the elderly man. This silent yet powerful image visually encapsulates how Sattler forces Hammond to confront the reality of his ill-fated creation.

5.2. *The imposition of the will of the child—Hammond*

Hammond struggles to silence the critical voices about his business venture. The will of the elderly-child figure overrides any possible dialogue with others, making it the norm and ultimate reference in the small Jurassic world of Nublar Island. At this point, the character is very clear: “Creation is an act of sheer will.” Rostagno provides another interesting clue in this regard: “Hammond hates inspections. They slow everything down”.

The first characteristic of this imposition of Hammond’s will is his lack of respect for the freedom of others. Regarding the visit that will evaluate his project, Hammond does not give any information about their destination, so they cannot properly prepare for what they will experience there, nor can they freely choose whether or not they want to go to a place infested with monsters. Even Gennaro, InGen’s lawyer, doesn’t seem to know.

The second characteristic of the philanthropist’s imposing will is the way he superimposes his narrative onto empirical reality. This is evident from the first appearance of the billionaire, in Grant and Sattler’s caravan, in the middle of the Montana desert. Hammond invites them to toast with the champagne that the palaeontologists had reserved for a special occasion (figure 3, left). The film’s art department carefully includes glasses on top of a microwave, ideal for toasting with this drink. However, Spielberg takes care to show the entire process in which Hammond cleans three ordinary glasses by hand, into which he finally pours the champagne. Additionally, at one point in the scene, the founder of InGen chooses to sit on the kitchen counter instead of using the available chairs in the caravan. These two simple gestures suggest a willingness to opt for other, less suitable possibilities.

Figure 3. Left: Sattler and Grant celebrate the funding that Hammond, sitting on the counter, has promised them (third narrative block). Right: Nedry places shaving cream on a slice of pie (fourth narrative block).



Source: *Jurassic Park*, Steven Spielberg, 1993.

Immediately in the following scene, the narrative introduces a character who opposes Hammond’s will and ultimately serves to refute the stability of this Jurassic island cosmos: Jurassic Park’s chief programmer, Dennis Nedry. According to the film, the conflict between the two characters revolves around a single aspect of InGen’s business venture with which Nedry strongly disagreed—his salary. Because of this, the rival company engaged in industrial espionage gains a powerful ally in this disgruntled employee. Nedry is depicted with attributes similar to Hammond’s. In a restaurant terrace in Costa Rica, where this scene takes place, Dodgson demonstrates to Nedry how a seemingly ordinary can of shaving cream is actually a concealed container designed to transport frozen dinosaur embryos. The deception is so cunning that the device even dispenses actual shaving cream. Nedry delights in watching the foam fall into his hand. When trying to get rid of it, instead of wiping his hand with a napkin or leaving the creamy emulsion on his own plate, with the remnants of a finished breakfast, he chooses to put the substance onto a cake on the neighbouring table. Some of the desserts on this table are topped with a spiral of whipped cream, amazingly similar in shape to the fake cream Nedry leaves (figure 3, right). This is yet another seemingly unnecessary detail for the plot’s progression that significantly contributes to portraying the character and reflecting the meticulous construction of the film’s thematic motifs. In this case, it highlights the theme of deception by characters displaying negative, childlike attributes.

5.3. Purification of the false illusions of Hammond and the revelation of reality

Hammond’s illusion of control and his grand cosmogonic efforts, epitomised in his famous phrase “Spared no expense,” do not withstand the test with reality. Several aspects of the film emphasise the fragility of this small world, starting with its security failures—ranging from the most significant, such as the initial velociraptor incident and Nedry’s sabotage, to seemingly minor ones, like the faulty car locks or Grant’s seatbelt struggle in the helicopter; even nature itself overcomes the genetic manipulation designed to prevent the animals from reproducing. Ironically, the only security measure that does not fail is the natural boundary of the Costa Rican Island itself: the sea.

As indicated in the analysis of the restaurant scene, Hammond is a stubborn man. His obstinacy does not fully dissipate until the end of the story, when they flee the visitor centre in an SUV. This makes his transformation attributable not to a single event in a specific scene but rather to the total dramatic arc, or second act. However, three major stages in his transformation can be identified. The first stage, the phase of dreamlike illusion, has already been discussed. The second stage is marked by his acceptance that certain aspects of Jurassic Park’s design have failed—though, for the philanthropist, this does not invalidate the entire project. However, the narrative suggests that these failures are not mere technical errors, in computing or finance, but rather the result of imprudence and poor judgment, which have moral implications. The security systems are deficient, yet the gift shop is fully stocked with unnecessary merchandise.

The third stage of Hammond’s transformation is the full realisation that Jurassic Park itself was a mistake. The billionaire comes to see reality in an entirely different way, effectively placing him in an inverse situation—a world opposite to the one he inhabited at the beginning of the story. Just as the film’s implicit author aligns with the moral perspectives of Grant, Sattler, and Malcolm, it also embraces the catharsis of Hammond’s newfound awareness. This shift is reflected in the film’s *mise-en-scène* and framing, which undergo a purification of perspective, visually reinforcing the transformation of the once-stubborn visionary. At this point, the use of mirrored shots—or the symmetry between shots that are discursively distant—extends this revelation of truth to the entire

film. Spielberg employs these mirrored or inverse shots⁴, to visually communicate shifts in perception, almost as an audiovisual revelation, similar to what literature refers to as *mundus inversus* (Babcock, 1978). The first shot, or Shot A, frames a reality, and the second shot, or Shot B, depicts the same scene but as if reflected in a mirror—offering a visually inverted image of Shot A, as if the world were reversed from how it was previously shown. Additionally, Shot B includes audiovisual and narrative attributes and elements that disrupt the judgment presented in Shot A. Spielberg arranges these pairs of shots throughout the film, placing a significant amount of narrative material between them. Ironically, when Sattler, Malcolm, and Muldoon flee in the jeep from the T-Rex, the director provides a close-up of the driver’s rearview mirror, where the message “Objects in mirror are closer than they appear” is visible. In *Jurassic Park*, there are at least three pairs of mirrored or inverse shots that illustrate this shift in perception regarding various issues the film addresses (figure 4).

Figure 4. Top: Inverse shots of Muldoon in the first scene and in the scene before his death. Middle: Inverse shots of the jeep door before the adventure begins and at the end of the film. Bottom: Inverse shots of Tim, Grant, and Lex in a tree after the T-Rex attack and in the helicopter in the final scene of the film.



Source: *Jurassic Park*, Steven Spielberg, 1993.

⁴ These inverse shots should not be confused with the classic reverse shot scheme, which, incidentally, has already been studied in the case of *Jurassic Park* by Mairata (2018, pp. 203–212).

Muldoon, the park’s head of security, stars in the first pair of inverse shots (figure 4, top), highlighting what he represents: the fantasy of control. The antagonism between Shot A and Shot B is based on both lighting and compositional aspects as well as narrative elements. While Shot A takes place in an environment of apparent maximum control during the transfer of a velociraptor, Shot B precedes Muldoon’s death from those very same animals, now free outside their enclosure. This serves as a symbolic image of the loss of any possible control over the situation.

The second pair of mirrored shots (figure 4, middle) consists of a close-up of the pristine passenger side door of the jeep, with the Jurassic Park logo as Shot A, and a shot of the muddy driver’s side door as Shot B. Shot A occurs in the context of the protagonists’ introduction to the park, the entry into the Jurassic world, while Shot B takes place at the end of the adventure, during the island’s evacuation, when everyone has learned the truth about this false paradise.

Finally, we find the inverse shots of Grant and the two siblings (figure 4, bottom)—Clarke (2014, p. 35) already suggests the connection between these two shots. Shot A takes place after the rescue of Tim and Lex from the T-Rex attack. The long medium shot of the three characters in the tree in the middle of the night captures the moment when the palaeontologist begins to embrace his inner transformation by taking on the responsibility of caring for the children. This idea is reinforced by the symbolic gesture of throwing away the velociraptor claw that the doctor had been carrying with him up until that point. Shot B alters lighting, spatial, and narrative elements, but more in the sense of progression rather than antagonism: what begins in Shot A, salvation, is fully realized in Shot B, which also seems to correspond with figure 2.

The compositional symmetries mentioned, especially the last one, complete what can be said about the textual theme of *Jurassic Park*: the human type embodied by Grant, Sattler, and Malcolm not only prevails but also saves the human type represented by the child—Hammond. At the same time, all the characters serving to extend the billionaire’s will to dominate—whether functional, like Arnold and Muldoon, or dysfunctional, like Nedry—have been devoured by the park’s dinosaurs. The full development of the dramatic world was necessary for all the deaths—both of the characters and what they represent—to occur, triggering Hammond’s transformation, which is suggested in the *mundus inversus* transported to us through the pairs of inverted shots.

6. Discussion

The theory of the hermeneutics of poetic possible worlds is well established, particularly in the works of García-Noblejas (2005) and Abellán-García Barrio (2023). However, there are few applied examples that consider all dimensions of audiovisual narratives, focusing primarily on what cinema shares with literature or theatre (Encinas Cantalapiedra *et al.*, 2025).

In the textual analysis of film, it is common to talk about the world of the work or its diegetic world, often as a significant part of what a cinematic work communicates or as something known when studying a film (Zunzunegui, 2016, p. 49, p. 158; Rodríguez Serrano, 2019). However, it is not so common to specify what is meant by “world,” nor the ways in which it may be known. The certainties provided by film analysis are not enough for this cognitive purpose; rather, a methodological orientation toward the world of the film is necessary. If the conclusions of an analysis pertain to the world of the work, it is essential to adopt a rationality of the world and methodologies capable of studying it. Our proposal offers a flexible notion of world, while being well-located: a system of natural and cultural possibilities available to a person for their happiness or unhappiness. This notion of the world allows for the accommodation of various hypotheses about the content, structure, and dynamism of the world that each audiovisual work contains.

“World” is a relational category that allows for understanding the textual theme of films according to their symbolic unity. When analysing *Jurassic Park* from the perspective of

mimesis of world, it is possible to understand that the moral considerations of the possibilities opened up by technological and scientific development (Spence, 2008), or its allegories of capitalism (Brown, 2009, pp. 15-16) and sadism (Gordon, 2008, pp. 203-217), are secondary to the true symbolic centre of the film: the childlike and deified subjects, dominated by a false illusion of control, introduce unnatural possibilities into the world that become monstrous, and the only ones capable of alleviating this tragedy are affectively and cognitively mature characters. Orbiting this symbolic centre of gravity are aspects such as the symbolism of Alan Grant as a substitute father, paradoxically similar to the dinosaurs (Fonte, 2008, p. 287; Alba, 2017, pp. 147-150), the negative valuation of family disunion (Gordon, 2008, p. 208; Fonte, 2008, pp. 43-44), or the connection between nature and morality (Spence, 2008; Clarke, 2014, p. 34)

Deciphering the internal logos of *Jurassic Park* is possible through the way in which theoretical suggestions of the hermeneutics of poetic possible worlds are methodologically specified and identified. We believe that three of the strategies followed can be applied in the analysis of other audiovisual works.

The first strategy involves delimiting the map of decisions prior to the beginning of the diegesis as a way of understanding the unnecessary, and culturally relevant, biases of the initial system of possibilities within the work. Studying the pre-diegetic period as the result of a path of freedom that has discarded other options helps to characterise both the authors of that voluntary journey and the system of possibilities their decisions generate.

The second methodological suggestion is a consequence of the first: the analysis of the microcosms in the first part of the film. This consists in identifying the narrative segments at the beginning of the film, analysing them according to the basic parameters of the mimesis of world—“the person and their circumstance, nature and culture; and social life” (Abellán-García Barrio, 2023, p. 287)—and establishing similarities and differences between these narrative blocks or microcosms. Textual film analysis understands that the beginning of audiovisual works often defines their character and provides their basic interpretive clues (e.g., Zunzunegui, 2016, pp. 23-43, pp. 149-158, pp. 182-199); our suggestion provides a possibilities-oriented approach to this common narrative filmmaking procedure.

For a more detailed analysis of the subject who wilfully commits this act of inappropriate insertion, a third strategy is needed, focused on what has traditionally been understood as the character's transformation arc (Sánchez-Escalonilla, 2001, pp. 291-298). What our proposal adds to the classic approach is an intensification of the character's existential reorientation, proposing that any change in the character can, in some way, imply a transformation of their pretensions and therefore a change of situation, that is, a transformation of their personal world. While both the infantilism (Sánchez-Escalonilla, 2004; Fonte, 2008, p. 288) and the “god complex” (Caldevilla, 2005, p. 128; Fonte, 2008, p. 54, p. 288) of Hammond in *Jurassic Park* have been noted, to understand what is purified in him, it has been necessary to explore how these two characteristics surround him with a shield of censorship, deception, and an illusory view of himself and others. The philanthropist undergoes an internal change that does not affect his personality or temperament, but rather his perceptions of reality in a broad and radical sense. On specific occasions, through the use of inverse shots, Spielberg shows that this transformation affects the entire narrative's discursive position. In addition to the intuitions about the trope of inversion (Morris, 2017b, p. 71), the compositional similarity between discourse-distant shots (Clarke, 2014, p. 35), or scenes functioning as reversals of others (Buckland, 2006, p. 188), the film now adds mirror-shot pairs. This underscores both the relationship between these aspects and the overall presence of the film's textual *topic*: they are an expression of the healing of the illusionist's gaze. Films like *The Searchers* (John Ford, 1956),

well-known and admired by Spielberg, already made use of compositional symmetries between the beginning and the end of the film (Zunzunegui, 2016, pp. 44-49), which suggests that the use of these mirror shots is not accidental.

7. Conclusion

The OBJ 1, which refers to the configuration of the textual world of *Jurassic Park* and the film's discursive position regarding the human issues it addresses, is achieved through the identification of both the updated and discarded possibilities and the study of the four narrative blocks. The decisions that unfold after the discovery of dinosaur DNA and culminates with the upcoming opening of the park provides insight into the delimitation of the map of possibilities prior to the start of the dramatic action. It also helps to reveal the motivations that originated the initial world or circumstance of the work: the pretension of control and god-like powers of creation reflects the inclusion of possibilities that are alien to the surrounding system.

The notion that in this possible world there is an order that is disrupted by the reappearance of dinosaurs as a possibility artificially introduced by Hammond is reproduced by analogy in the four narrative blocks or cinematic microcosms at the beginning of the work. In each of these microcosms, the initial configuration is always disrupted by the voluntary—not merely “natural”—introduction of an external agent which fatally damages the system. This structural and dynamic identity between the four initial microcosms and the macrocosm serves to emphasise the central idea of the textual *topic* and, consequently, to guide the viewer in understanding the subsequent narrative using these interpretive clues.

OBJ 2 was achieved by clarifying the type of message that *Jurassic Park* communicates through the transformation of Hammond's character. In the climax of the story, this philanthropist's perspective on his own creation is purified: the fantasy of control over nature is replaced by a reverential fear of the dinosaurs. Unlike the three scientists invited to the park, who, through their imagination and prudent judgment, understand that the idea of Jurassic Park is dangerous and unwise, Hammond, with a poor imagination and weak moral bearings, must witness the empirical horror as a condition for transformation.

Hammond's moral weakness, as the architect of the misguided *Jurassic Park*, is expressed through the signs of childhood in a negative sense. The film conveys this implicit idea both through the script and audiovisual depiction, particularly in the camera movements during his encounter with his grandchildren and his conversation with Sattler in the restaurant. This childlike yet domineering attitude is also reflected in the set design and background objects, which communicate a predilection for inappropriate actions or attitudes despite the better alternatives, as well as a willingness to deceive or impose a false narrative over reality. Despite this illusion of control, the narrative goes on to expose negligence in matters of safety.

Not only does Hammond undergo a transformation in his judgments, ultimately accepting the paradigm of the scientists, the film itself seems to mirror this intellectual and moral shift. This is eloquently demonstrated through the use of mirrored shots, which reflect an inversion in the perception of reality. This audiovisual expression of the *mundus inversus* conveys the cathartic aspect of the work. *Jurassic Park* depicts the purification of a mindset bewitched by the thrill of dominance and the fantasy of control—an illusion typical of modernity, and characteristic of childish and godlike minds, such as that of the septuagenarian John Hammond.

By achieving OBJ 1 and OBJ 2, it is possible to address OBJ 3, that is, to explain the textual *topic* of *Jurassic Park*. Indeed, the thematic aspects in this analysis allow us to assert that an examination of *Jurassic Park*, guided by the hermeneutic criteria of mimesis of world, is useful for uncovering the poetic strategies that develop a textual *topic* in which the negative assessment of Hammond's project, due to its unnatural nature, is fundamental. This *contra*

natura behaviour should be understood not only in an ecological sense but, above all as an expression of the character's cognitive and emotional dislocation, which leads to severe consequences that can be evaluated through moral categories.

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